

# Only Human

By SIDNEY FIELDS

**80,000 More  
To Be  
Freed**

The only thing James Aloysius Britt Donovan would still like to accomplish in Cuba is to get Castro to grant a general amnesty that would empty his dungeons of political prisoners who have served at least one year.

"I have a personal pledge from Castro to give such an amnesty favorable consideration as the threat of invasion decreases," Donovan said.

How many would be freed by such an amnesty?

"I think our government has estimated that there are 80,000 political prisoners in Cuban jails," replied Donovan, a former assistant and prosecutor at the Manhattan trials.

He was talking in his law office in Lower Manhattan. He is short, stocky, white-haired, 47, and weary. Very weary. On one day last week he attended a Board of Education meeting (he is Vice-President), took off that same afternoon to make a speech in New Orleans, returned to New York for a day, then flew to Ohio the next day to address the Ohio State Bar Association. The week before he had been freed by his doctor from a seven day detention in the hospital for complete checks and tests, but mostly to rest from sheer exhaustion.

"Everyone, including me, agrees that I must take a solid month's rest," he said. "I will soon, and it will be the first in ten years."

HE'S BEEN on a constant fun since his nimble brain and foot-

work resulted in the exchange of Russian spy Rudolf Abel for U-2 pilot Gary Powers and student Frederick Pryor. The run really began in 1957 when Donovan was assigned by the court to defend Abel. After two years of trial and appeals Donovan was awarded a \$10,000 fee. He promptly gave half to Fordham college, \$2,500 to Harvard Law School, and \$2,500 to Columbia Law. He attended the first two. His two assistants in the Abel case were Columbia graduates.

He barely had time to resume his law practice and normal commuting to his home in Brooklyn, where he lives with his wife, three daughters and a son, when the Cuban Family Committee asked him for help in freeing the 1,163 Cubans captured in the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Since he began last June over 6,000 Cubans and Americans have been freed. Several hundred Americans were not in Cuban jails, but were unable to leave; 35 Americans were in jail. Donovan's immediate mission will be completed when a final Red Cross ship leaves Cuba at the end of this month. The long-range hope is still a general amnesty.

"All of this sets up a curious

difficulty in the minds of anti-Castro Cubans," Donovan said. "They want desperately to have their families and friends freed, yet the effort eases tension and may lead to some form of co-existence with Castro which they definitely do not want."

The cost of the exchange has so far run into tens of millions of dollars in food, drugs, medicines. Some have called the price paid, "bribery," even "blackmail."

"They can call it what they want to," said Donovan, "but there's only one way to see it. Many people were released from bondage and many Cubans in Cuba are very grateful to Americans. We have five inspectors there who told us the drugs saved the lives of 100 children."

He went on to explain, "The drug stores in Cuba were empty

before the exchange. They are now filled. Any Cuban sick or in pain knows the drugs he uses come from us because each package is clearly marked, 'Made In U.S.A.' and many have a little American flag on them."

And he concluded, "The drugs are of more value to the United States than fifty Voice of America broadcasts a day."

EVERY DAY he still gets



JAMES BRITT DONOVAN: FREEDOM vs. COEXISTENCE

some 40 letters, from Cuban prisoners in Cuba or their families here, asking for his aid. He also gets letters from Poland and Yugoslavia. He answers them all, as best as he can.

(It's a curious, if obvious fact that there are no political prisoners in the Western World who write to Castro.)

Donovan, of course, has accepted no compensation for all his work in Cuba. But there's nothing in the world as self-rewarding as this," he said.

Though he did not seek office, Democrats made him their candidate for the U.S. Senate. Fall 1965 was a campaign year. He visited many countries and spent much time in Cuba. Yet he came back

2,300,000 votes. Would he accept the nomination for the Senate again?

"I'd want to consider that. I'm certain of one thing. I wouldn't be an active candidate for the nomination," he said.

Whatever he has done in Cuba has been done with the consent, and the help of the Federal government, and in this sense, his actions have indicated Federal policy. If coexistence with Castro is coming and diplomatic relations were resumed, would Donovan accept the ambassadorship in Havana?

"I don't know," he said. "I'm really puzzled at the thought. There are so many factors to think of. So many..."

But he spoke like a man who might be seriously tempted.